

Biblical Background

MARK 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: In the same setting in Galilee as last week's Gospel, Jesus' dialogue with the Twelve Apostles continues. The setting most likely is the city of Capernaum, in Peter's house, which is becoming headquarters for Jesus and his apostles in Galilee.

TERMS: **Gehenna** Gehenna is the name of the garbage dump that is always burning outside of the city walls of Jerusalem. It is the reference point for being cut off, outside the safety of the city walls, among trash, isolated, and unprotected. A fire is always burning trash there. For Jesus, this physical place becomes the metaphor for being outside of God's caring love and presence within the protection and care of a community.

In my name In the time of Jesus, a person's identity and power would be in his name. In Mediterranean culture today, sons are named in reference to their fathers. Such as Simon bar Jonah, "son of John". What is done in the name of Jesus is done in the name of God his Father.

Cut off To be cut off in first century culture would be one's greatest fear. Safety was only found in the group, in the family, and in the walled city. To be cut off from anything cause one to be cut off from Jesus. To be attached, this is what Jesus asks of his disciples. Survival in isolation would not be possible in those times.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Mediterranean culture is group centered. Loyalty to the group and leader are valued at the highest level. This extends to family in regards to holding the mother and father in the highest esteem. Loyalty to family is very important. Mediterranean loyalty means faithfulness no matter what. Jesus is building on this value while calling for loyalty to God the Father as the eternal value and highest good. Jesus has come to enliven and create a new family. Being attached to this family will be where one will find grace and nourishment for the fullness of life.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: As Jesus pronounces his upcoming death and resurrection, he begins to reveal the new world reality he will usher in, that is the Body of Christ. Jesus is trying to move the apostles from the focus on the individual, to focus on the group and the primacy of membership. In the power of the Holy Spirit, all of humanity can become infused with the healing and transforming graces of God. When Jesus speaks of someone "doing a miracle in my name" - of offering nourishment, a cup of water - these are acts that enliven and strengthen the greater community.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: What can we each do, as family members, to keep our home safe in small and big ways?

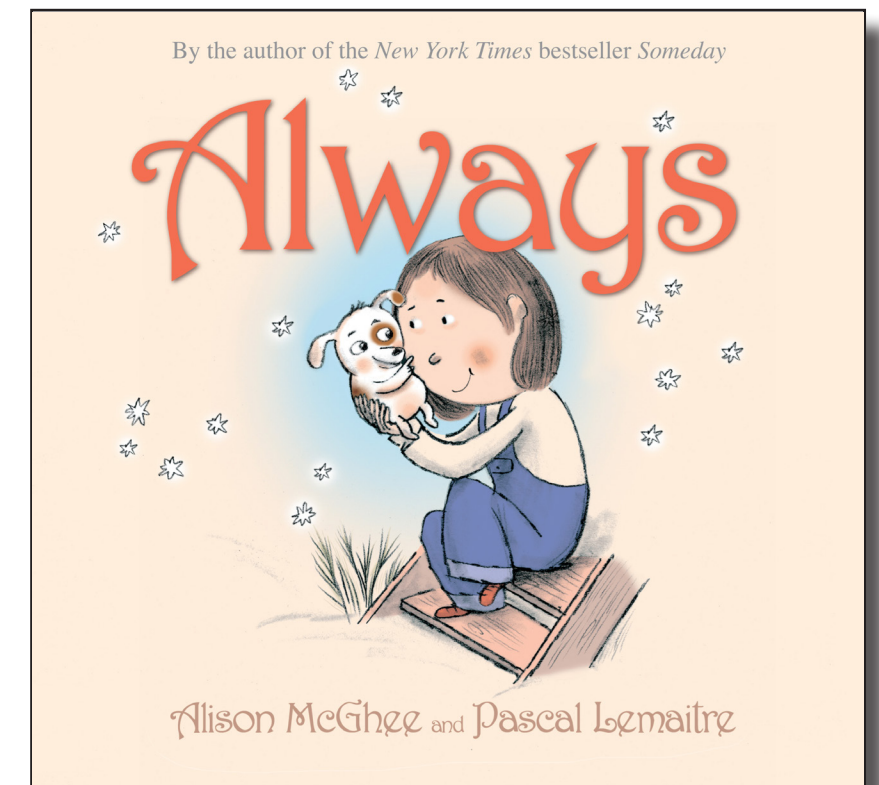
CHARACTER QUALITIES: PROTECTING THE SMALL
KNOWING THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS #1

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Create a popsicle stick house illustrating who and what protects your family and their faith. Write destructive habits on rocks and place them near the house. As a family, talk about what can protect your castle from those harmful habits "crushing" your safe home. Write a gospel attitude or behavior on a rock as to how you want to help to build up your family's castle/home and to keep it safe. Place rocks in a place where family members can pray for each other for growth and these positive building blocks in family life.

CYCLE B 26TH SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

Living Grace

"PROTECTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD
IS WORTH ONE'S ALL"



*In **Always**, we learn about how deep the bond can be between a child and a beloved pet. And how far a pet will go to protect his dear friend. To the ends of the earth . . . always. **Always** is about friendship, loyalty, and most of all love - love that knows no bounds!*

Art & Faith

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



HARVEST IN PROVENCE

Painting by Vincent Van Gogh ~ 1888
Israel Museum ~ Jerusalem, Israel

EXPLORING THE ART:

PROTECTING THE HARVEST

Harvest in Provence was one of many paintings that Van Gogh made of the countryside surrounding Arles, France. It reflects his experiments with flat areas of color and bold outlines. He differentiated his brushstrokes, seen here in the spiky cut cornfield contrasted against the flat area of standing corn, and was applying his paint in great thick strokes that lend the picture plane a textural quality.

This painting depicts a beautiful cornfield that is being harvested. Farmers have to protect the growth of the harvest or there will be no food for those who hunger. This applies literally (in fields of corn), and spiritually, as Jesus explains to his disciples. They must be diligent and protective of the growth of the community of believers, especially the little ones. Therefore, demons should be cast out, the thirsty should be given drinks, and weeds need to be pulled (or eyes and hands cut off). If the growth (or the harvest) is not protected then there will be no food for those who hunger both physically and spiritually.

Sunday Gospel

MARK 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

At that time, John said to Jesus,
"Teacher, we saw someone driving out demons in
your name,
and we tried to prevent him because he does not
follow us."

Jesus replied, "Do not prevent him.
There is no one who performs a mighty deed in
my name
who can at the same time speak ill of me.
For whoever is not against us is for us.
Anyone who gives you a cup of water to drink
because you belong to Christ,
amen, I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who
believe in me to sin,
it would be better for him if a great millstone
were put around his neck
and he were thrown into the sea.
If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life maimed
than with two hands to go into Gehenna,
into the unquenchable fire.
And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off.
It is better for you to enter into life crippled
than with two feet to be thrown into Gehenna.
And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.
Better for you to enter into the kingdom of God
with one eye
than with two eyes to be thrown into Gehenna,
where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is
not quenched.'

Read-aloud video link:

[ALWAYS](#)

Written by Alison McGhee & Illustrated by Pascal Lemaitre

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

"JESUS EXPLAINS THAT THE STAKES ARE HIGH WHEN PROTECTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD; ESPECIALLY THE LITTLE ONES."

Behaviors are outward signs of a person's inward disposition. A strong and good inner life matters more than status or rank in the Kingdom of God. Jesus is saying that we have to be diligent in protecting the growth of the faith community. Especially when it comes to the young and vulnerable.

Disciples of Jesus must do whatever it takes protect God's life and presence in the community of believers. If not protected, growth will be hindered or damaged. Gehenna is the valley where the landfill is located, outside the city wall of Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. Jesus points to Gehenna to illustrate the despairing situation that will result from a person being cut off from the community. Behaviors are what clearly separate those who are or are not "in Christ".

In our story the dog is a super hero - one who demonstrates how parents and Christian leaders are called to protect the growth and safety of God's little ones. Protecting the spiritual growth of our children comes at a great cost and is worth it. Jesus calls us to be sacrificial in protecting the growth of the Kingdom of God. Our physical needs are temporary. Our spiritual state is eternal. Jesus makes this point dramatically. He is being figurative not literal. Jesus has just announced in the previous Sunday Gospel passage that he will be laying down his life as a sacrifice. His followers will be called to do the same.

Our body house elements that humans use enjoy our physical lives. Our connection to God and our connection to the body of Christ, Jesus tells us, are more important. Our connection to the kingdom of God will lead us to paradise; to union with God and each other, both now and forever. Jesus is making it clear in this gospel that this is serious work. Wake up and be ready!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

MY STORY: What things you are afraid of? What could hurt your castle, your home? What things you are afraid of that could hurt you? How do your teachers work to keep your classroom a safe place for you to grow? How do your parents work to keep your home a safe and loving environment?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: How does the dog, demonstrates the call to protect the little girl from harm? Are these examples realistic? Or are they extreme to make a point? What point do you think the author is trying to make?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Does Jesus use dramatic examples in this Gospel? What point do you think he is trying to make?

Our ability to see, feel, and to walk are of ultimate importance to our everyday lives. These abilities are essential, but not as essential our relationship to God. Our connection to the Kingdom of God will lead us to paradise; to union with God and each other, both now and forever!